

## Prepare for Emergencies

### What is "Shelter-in-Place"?

In the event of a chemical release, safety sirens in Contra Costa County's industrial corridor will sound to alert the public. If you hear the sirens, or are told to Shelter-in-Place, emergency officials recommend that you **Shelter, Shut and Listen**:

- Stay inside
- Close all windows and secure doors (locking provides a tighter seal).
- Turn off all ventilation systems such as heating or air conditioning.
- If there are gaps in windows or doors, seal with tape or damp towels.
- Have an AM radio for emergencies and tune to KCBS 740 for more information



### How do you know when to Shelter-in-Place?

Contra Costa County has a [Community Warning System](#) in place that uses several tools to alert the public. If there is a chemical release with the potential to impact the community, the outdoor Safety Sirens located in the vicinity of the emergency will be sounded. The sirens will sound for about 3 minutes, and will be re-sounded periodically during the emergency. The sirens are tested on the first Wednesday of every month at 11:00 a.m. Safety sirens are located in the industrial corridor of the County from Oakley to Richmond ([view presentation with maps of siren coverage](#)). There are other CWS tools to alert people in case of an emergency in other areas.



Shelter-in-Place advisories are issued by emergency officials via the news media. County officials recommend tuning an AM radio to KCBS 740. NOAA weather radios in Contra Costa County with SAME functionality will also receive Shelter-in-Place alerts. (These radios have been provided to schools, childcare centers, hospitals, etc. in the industrial corridor to provide indoor alerting and information, but anyone can purchase a weather radio with SAME capabilities from a retail supplier. NWS radios will sound an alert tone, followed by a voice message about the chemical emergency. Consider adding a weather radio to your facility.)

The County also has a phone ringdown system that would automatically begin calling homes and businesses in the impacted area with pre-recorded instructions about what to do. Even unlisted numbers will receive this call in the impacted areas.

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### **What should we do during a chemical emergency?**

If emergency officials recommend that people in your area Shelter-in-Place, you should stay inside and encourage customers, vendors, and others to do the same. Allow people from outside to Shelter-in-Place in your facility. Begin implementing your site emergency plan. For a Shelter-in-Place emergency, you will need to stay inside until the chemical leak has stopped and winds have dissipated any vapors in the vicinity.

### **Here are the recommended steps to Shelter-in-Place:**

1. Advise everyone to stay inside.  
Announce to everyone in the building that the County has issued a Shelter-in-Place advisory. Recommend that people not leave the building during this time unless specifically ordered to do so by police or fire personnel. Leaving the building could result in exposure to toxic chemical vapors.
2. Close all doors, windows and other sources of outside air.  
Close and lock windows for a tighter seal. Control access doors (locking will provide a tighter seal). Post a Shelter-in-Place in Effect Controlled Access sign in the window so that people outside will

know you are closed and Sheltering-In-Place. If additional people want to enter to Shelter-in-Place, minimize the time the door is held open. Move others in the room away from the door that is opened. People who insist on leaving the building should be allowed to leave, but advise them it is at their own risk since emergency officials have issued a Shelter-in-Place advisory.

3. Turn off all air conditioning or heating systems  
Your building's thermostats or air-handling cutoff switches should be labeled, and employees should be trained where they are located and how they work. Ceiling fans or portable fans can be used inside to keep cool while the ventilation system is shut down.
  4. Turn on your AM radio to KCBS 740  
Emergency officials in Contra Costa County recommend tuning to KCBS 740 for emergency information. Officials will be providing the news media with updated information on the locations that should continue to Shelter-in-Place. If you have a television available, Bay Area television stations will also provide news reports, and should scroll information during the event.
  5. Stay off the telephone  
Contra Costa County has a telephone ringdown system that will begin calling numbers in the impacted area during a Shelter-in-Place emergency. Avoid using the phone so it is available to receive the informational call. Do not call 9-1-1 to get more information. Only call 9-1-1 if you need immediate assistance with a life-threatening emergency. Overloaded telephone circuits (including cellular phone calls) can prevent actual emergency calls from getting through.
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### **How long will the sirens sound?**

The sirens will sound initially for about three minutes. They will continue to be resounded periodically if the event continues. Shelter-in-Place alerts are also broadcast over weather radios in Contra Costa County, and the County operates a phone ringdown system that is activated for Shelter-in-Place alerts.

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### **How will we know when the emergency is over?**

County officials will announce the All Clear via the news media, so keep monitoring KCBS 740. There is no separate Safety Siren signal for All Clear. The sirens were not designed to be heard indoors. The County will also reactivate its telephone ringdown system to begin calling numbers in the impacted area with the All Clear message, but it may take a little while to call all numbers. If you have Internet access, you can register for free Shelter-in-Place alerts and All Clear messages via e-mail at [www.incident.com](http://www.incident.com).

After the All Clear is announced, Health Department officials recommend that you open your windows and doors and air out your building.

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### **When are the sirens tested?**

The sirens are tested on the first Wednesday of each month at 11:00 a.m. They only sound for about one minute during the test, but will sound for three minutes during a real event.